



May 29, 2001

01-14

## **CHP COMMISSIONER RESPONDS TO INCREASE IN MEMORIAL DAY FATALITIES**

SACRAMENTO - California Highway Patrol (CHP) officials expressed concern over the dramatic increase in the number of deaths on California's roads and highways during the Memorial Day weekend. Final weekend statistics show 45 people were killed this year (40 in CHP jurisdiction and 5 in incorporated cities), nearly double last year's total of 24. Of the 40 killed in CHP jurisdiction, 25 (63 percent) were not wearing safety belts.

"I am outraged that so many victims were not wearing their safety belt," said Commissioner D. O. "Spike" Helmick. "It is a fact that you are 75 percent more likely to survive a crash if you are wearing your safety belt. I am told that in a number of the weekend collisions, officers on scene reported that many of the victims would have survived if they were wearing their safety belt. There is simply no excuse for not buckling up."

California boasts a 90 percent safety belt compliance rate, and while that's admirable, CHP officials are focused on convincing the last 10 percent to buckle up. "It is imperative that motorists recognize that without the use of a safety belt, they are putting their lives at risk every time they get behind the wheel," said Helmick. Helmick also reminds motorists that it is against the law to ride in a vehicle without a safety belt. CHP officers are continuing the maximum enforcement effort with a focus on safety belt usage. "I am asking every officer to be on the lookout for motorists who are not wearing a belt. We must reverse the weekend trend."

#####

*Flex your power. Do all you can to conserve.*